UNITY

FREEDOM, FELLOWSHIP AND CHARACTER IN RELIGION

A Liberal Looks At Death - *Peter H. Samsom*

1955: Spinoza Brought Up to Date - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - *David Gittleman*

A Laboratory of Better Living - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - *Leonard S. Kenworthy*

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Western Conference News

VOLUME CXLI No. 4

Chicago, November-December, 1955

PRICE TWENTY-FIVE CENTS

UNITY

Established 1878

Published Bimonthly *Subscription $1.50*

Except During July-August *Single Copies 25 cents*

Published by The Abraham Lincoln Centre, 700 Oakwood Blvd., Chicago 15, Ill.

"Entered as Second-Class Matter October 7, 1952, at the post office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879."

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THE FIELD

"The world is my country, to do good is my Religion"

The Till Kidnapping

The failure of a Le Flore County, Mississippi, grand jury to indict J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant for the kidnapping of Emmett Till was sharply criticized recently by the American Civil Liberties Union. The Union said that the grand jury's failure to indict, in the face of uncontradicted testimony at the earlier trial that the two men had taken Till from his uncle's cabin, appears to be a "shocking example of racial discrimination."

The Union's views were made public by its executive director, Patrick Murphy Malin.

The ACLU, Malin pointed out, had not commented on the petit jury verdict in the murder trial, because its concern as an organization is limited to civil liberties and does not extend to judgment on the facts of any case. But the function of a grand jury is to indict upon probable cause, Malin said, continuing that probable cause exists in the kidnapping in view of the sheriff's testimony at the murder trial that Milam and Bryant had confessed that they had taken young Till from the cabin of his uncle, Moses Wright.

"In the face of this, there seems no other explanation than that the grand jury simply refused to indict two white men for the kidnapping of a Negro. Such discriminatory treatment by a grand jury, one of the main supports of our legal system of justice, may encourage other persons who wish to do violence to Negroes. It is an open invitation to flout the law.

"However, this latest attack on the principle of equality will not halt the efforts of individuals and organizations who are determined that the idea of equality for all Americans must be eventually achieved in every part of the country which now denies it in any way. The ACLU and others will as one step toward this goal continue to press for changes in the federal civil rights laws which will enable the federal government to take more direct action in protection of minority group rights."

—*ACLU Bulletin.*

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VOLUME CXLI NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1955 No. 4

EDITORIAL

For the immediate future international relations will be highly complicated and vastly important. The United States, as the most powerful nation on the earth, must of necessity be involved in world affairs that are not of its own making and not to its liking. Never in all history has there been such generosity to all parts of the world as that of the United States of America. But this very generosity brings with it fear, anxiety, and sometimes ill will. Actually America has no desire to control the earth, but this has not been made plain to countries that are undergoing revolutionary upheavals. We need a foreign policy that will make it clear that we have no designs against any nation that has no designs against us; that we will not support imperialism anywhere; that we will help democratic movements everywhere; that we favor freedom of international trade, freedom of cultural interchange, and freedom of people to travel about the world. In implementing this policy we must make it known that we will maintain strong military power and that we will come to the rescue of democratic countries that need our help. But we must not constantly rattle our bombs, nor threaten steps that we do not intend to take. Moreover, we must make it plain that we support the United Nations and that we will not allow any country to use this international instrument for ulterior purposes. In the immediate future our foreign affairs must be conducted by men who are of first-rate calibre, who know the whole world, who are not swayed by insane fears nor unrealistic ideals, who will not clamor for war, and who will not cry peace when there is no peace. I do not know who will be the next President of the United States, but if, as now appears likely, Adlai Stevenson is elected, I here and now nominate for post of Secretary of State, Chester Bowles, who has all the qualifications to do a first-rate job in this most important post.

Curtis W. Reese.

A Liberal Looks At Death

PETER H. SAMSOM

No human experience, except perhaps the mystery of love, has commanded more attention and thought through the ages than has the experience and fact of death. James H. Breasted, in his *Dawn of Conscience,* tells us that in the very oldest existing record of human thought, the Pyramid Texts of Egypt, dating from 26 centuries B.C., the dominant note is an insistent, passionate protest against death. Egypt's vast tombstones, the Pyramids, are silent testimony to man's ancient belief that he could defy death's challenge by erecting material monuments of everlasting stone—a pathetic belief as we see it now, yet a belief with a profound element of human dignity and courage, for here was man, a weak and almost defenseless creature, standing up to nature's final reality and affirming that there is something in human life, in man's spirit, that is not crushed by the death that awaits all living things. Man, who still loves life no matter what defeats and sorrows it brings him, dares and always has dared to hope and believe that the close of his span of physical life does not spell the end of the beauties, values, and promises he has found in living.

No religion man has ever conceived in his fertile imagination has ever been able to avoid grappling with the fact of death, unless it be Christian Science, which solves the problem by denying that death is real. Religion in general has answered death by placing man's brief life in its widest possible setting, the framework of eternity, looking beyond his little world of space and beyond his brief experience of love and hate and hope. Always there is the cry of protest against the finality of death, and behind the cry of protest is the huddled shape of fear: human fear of the unknown, the dark, fear of losing what is near and dear, fear of extinction. Yet on these foundations man's unconquerable spirit has erected a magnificent structure of hope, pure yearning hope at once selfish and selfless, and so vigorous that even the complete lack of evidence of its actual truth does not weaken or destroy it!

The hope of religion has always been that somehow the essence of man lives on through death, and is liberated by death for a more free and glorious existence in eternity. It is more than merely interesting to realize that, of all the varieties of religion, very few have ever been willing or able to face death without a trace of fear and accept it as a natural and good thing. Three noted exceptions are the Confucian religion of ancient China, the Stoic religion of the Roman Empire, and the modern free secular faith we call Unitarian. Other Oriental religions for the most part deny death by the mechanical device of reincarnation and rebirth, while other Western religions deny death by affirming the continued eternal existence of the personal soul. Only rarely has religion sought to overcome man's fear of death by simply accepting it as a necessary fact of nature, as the lot of every creature that is born, an event as natural and therefore as good as birth, as life itself.

The scientific temper has gradually convinced modern minds that we do not know what lies beyond death, and have no evidence for believing in any kind of conscious life continuing after the body dies. We know far more about life, but not an iota more about immortality. Modern religion has gained one real insight, however, as a result of this awareness of our ignorance of anything beyond physical life. Modern religion knows now that the idea of immortality is not a fact, but a powerful hope—a hope which human experience, religion, and philosophy can encourage and rationalize, but which nothing can prove or disprove. We know now that man's belief in a future existence is born of human fear, human hope, and human affection.

We know, too, that this immortal hope is a legacy to us from ages when men lived in a totally different thought-world from our own. The ages when the hope of personal immortality was strongest were ages when men actually had little history to look back on and live with, ages when men were largely unaware of a tremendous human past, and when they did not expect much of a future for the world. It is only in the modern age that such a thing as a sense of history has existed. This is an era in which we take for granted a rapidly growing fund of knowledge about the past, and when we naturally expect an infinitely long future for human life, barring some natural catastrophe which would make conditions for life impossible. But before the modern era there was little sense of history and little feeling for the future as we anticipate it. Most men actually lived and thought within a little space of memory, folklore and dim anticipation bounded before and behind by walls beyond which they never dreamed of penetrating. They knew no long past as we know it now, and expected no limitless future for mankind and the world as we do now, for the idea of continuing evolution had not yet dawned. This was the mental climate in which the idea of immortality first emerged.

The vital point of this contrast for us today is that we are more or less accustomed to living with both an infinitely long past and an inconceivably long future, and our science does not encourage us to believe that there is any actual beginning or closing point at either end. To be sure, unreflective men still think of life as they have always done—as a little one-act drama bounded by personal memories or religious beliefs in a day of creation and a day of judgment. But reflective men who appreciate the mental revolution which has occurred realize today that we live in a universe without beginning and without end, infinite as far as we are concerned. These changes have naturally affected our thinking about death and its meaning. Though we know no more than we ever have about another life, we know vastly more about this one and its scope, and we have pushed back its limits into the distance both behind us and before. It is within this setting of an infinite natural universe that the liberal strives to understand the reality of death.

However, this change in our mental perspective on death has not yet seriously affected our natural human emotions when we stand face to face with death. Radical as the change in intellectual climate has been, men still react emotionally as they always have since time immemorial, when death strikes a blow and re-

moves loved and familiar faces from their company. There is no one, surely, who has not been stunned and dazed by the presence of death, or who has not watched with grief and silent protest the oncoming approach of death to one he loves. All men know, too, the sharp experience of the sense of loss when the first numbing shock wears off, and they must face the actuality of living without one who has been close to them. As the weeks, months and years pass, we know how sensitive the scar of loss can be, how any ordinary memory or incident can touch and stir it, till time and new interests, and new love and affection, work their healing power. These emotions are the common lot of men everywhere; they visit with equal foot the proudest and the humblest, so that no one need feel that fate has singled him out for a special harsh treatment when death robs him of a companion. This is the great, universal human sorrow which unites all human hearts and touches every human life.

In this rich, fertile soil of emotion there grows the hope of immortality, till for some it becomes as certain as the rising sun in the morning. Yet we observe that even this beautiful hope does not protect men from grief. Believer and skeptic alike experience it and suffer it, and no one has ever been able to show that he who believes in another life to come is more immune from grief than he who does not. Despite all religion's assurances of immortality, grief takes its toll and leaves its scar, for the human heart is one wherever it is found. Grief is man's cry of anguish at losing a part of himself when someone is torn away from him. Everywhere and always grief is the human expression of man's need of love and his love of life.

Yet the nature of ongoing life decrees that we cannot remain long in the valley of sorrow and self-pity, but must by the very nature of life climb up and walk the highroad of affirmative living again. And here we confront the really important problem: not how we can escape being touched by death, or how we can deny or conquer death, for we cannot escape or conquer it. The vital question at the roots of human life is how we can best accept the reality of death and learn to live with it without fear or rebellion. How can we weave it into a philosophy of life so that it does not for long crush us with grief and cripple our natural capacity for positive living? It is precisely here, at the crux of death's problem for the living, that our modern situation becomes clear, and leads us to a realistic philosophy which men in earlier ages never could know. It is here that our sense of history comes to our aid. Our new conception of the ongoing continuity of human life, our perspective on the infinite past and the infinite future combine to lay for us a foundation on which we may, if we will, build a realistic faith. Such a faith can at once proclaim the living truth of ongoing life, and accept the fact of death.

Let us come straight to the main point of this faith: Death is not the end of life in the real sense at all, though it does bring our individual personal consciousness to a close. I speak now in terms of this life we know with no reference to another possible world. As we look back over the pageant of mankind, it becomes daily more obvious that some human figures are still very much alive, though their bodies are dead and gone. In every culture on the face of the earth is a host of immortals who are as alive and real for the living generation as if they were actually, physically present. We need merely mention the classic examples of Jesus and Lincoln, whose deaths can be said to have marked the beginning rather than the end of their most potent influence on human affairs. This is the natural miracle which human memory performs every day. John Huss, one of the first to give his life at the stake for religious freedom, was given real immortality by the Roman Catholic Church, which thought it was killing his ideas when it killed him, but Huss has been preaching ever since, through every voice that affirms the spiritual dignity of man's right to think for himself in religion.

"Beethoven" wrote Romain Rolland, "is the best friend of those who suffer and struggle," Beethoven who himself said not long before he died: "How happy I feel that even when lying in my grave I may be useful to you,"—said with no vainglory but simply in recognition of the profound law of life which decrees that what a man says and does has an influence often far beyond his own time and place. Do you remember Vachel Lindsay's poem in memory of Illinois' great governor, John P. Altgeld?

> Sleep softly, eagle forgotten, under the stone.
> Time has its way with you there, and the clay has its own.
> Sleep on, O brave-hearted, O wise man that kindled the flame—
> To live in mankind is far more than to live in a name—
> To live in mankind is far, far more, than to live in a name!

Yes, you will say, that is all very inspiring, but these were great and illustrious men. Of course they are never really gone, they are our constant companions. But how many such immortals are there in comparison with the hosts of mankind? What consolation is it to you, to me, and to the rank and file of humanity who will make no lasting mark on human history? Here we make our second step toward a positive faith in the ongoing life of humanity as our real immortality. Yes, of course the brilliance of some will always outshine the multitude of men by far. But what we are apt to forget is that actually what they have done in gaining such immortality is but to provide a brilliant example of the immortality that is the possession of every human being who ever lived, each in his own way.

We have seldom realized vividly enough that we have a continuing history as human beings. There is not a single person who has lived, who has not in some way made an impression or wielded an influence, no matter how small or unknown. Think of the old controversy between heredity and environment—whatever your answer to it, the fact stands out that it is in a way an effort to find how human immortality actually works! Does it operate through the passing on of physical genes, or through the social environment we create and which in turn shapes us? Traditional religion has so preoccupied us with eternal life in another world that we have hardly begun to realize how much living immortality there is in our own lives here and now, how much we owe to the humanity that has given us life and lives in us, and how much we in turn shape the future through our own decisions and actions.

To bring the matter closer to home, let each one of us think of his own life, and how much it has been affected by the still living influence of someone

who is long gone. Who is there among us who is not conscious every day of the unseen companionship of someone who has been part of our lives. Talking about some obscure, forgotten professor in the college where he was educated, Thomas Jefferson once said, "Dr. Small probably shaped the destinies of my life." Who was this Dr. Small? He has left no record other than this mention by Jefferson. How many such Dr. Smalls are there in each of our lives—a relative, a friend, a teacher, who all unwittingly said or did something that lent courage or discouragement to us at some point, an influence vivid in our lives but unknown to the world at large? Our memories are full of such influences, and seldom can you tell when you yourself are wielding it so that someone in later years will recall you with gratitude—or regret. This is the privilege we all have, a privilege we can use, abuse, or fritter away. It is the privilege of building immortality while we live, for he who actively and responsibly shares in the ongoing life of humanity is sharing in immortality, an immortality that needs no proof or argument. We realize again how deeply interconnected and interdependent are the lives of all human beings —living, dead, and to be born.

We have the materials here for a vigorous, creative philosophy of life, indeed a religion, that can not only accept death, but can recognize its positive role in our life as a natural means to the very thing that makes life rich and good—namely, the unity and continuity of our existence with all mankind. Whatever form it takes, the essence of such a philosophy is that there is so much in life that survives death and is even given added power by death, that we should realize that we allow death's negative aspect far too much power over us when we brood over the injustices and tragedies it often causes. Our life as members of a continuing human fellowship is far, far broader and richer than we usually imagine. Our living fellowship with humanity is not limited to the few who surround us, whom we can see. Every day of our lives, we are accompanied by a great host of unseen companions who have had a part, no matter how small, in making our life what it is. What we call the past is not dead at all. It is people, ideas, movements, decisions, hopes and fears that are alive because they are a part of us and are embodied in us, and are passed on by us in turn to those yet to come.

Biologists are fond of telling us how the ancestry of each one of us fans out and multiplies so rapidly as we go back, generation after generation, that each of us has millions of ancestors in actual fact. This thought may be amazing, or embarrassing, or inspiring, depending on how we want to think of it—but it is true, and not only biologically. Our inner life, our philosophies, our religions, our institutions, our music, art, science, and literature, have all come to us by grace of millions long since gone. Some of them are known, and never to be forgotten as long as men prize their heritage. Others have not lived as names, but have by the quality of their lives made possible advances or orthodoxies man inherits. Great and common men alike, they are all living parts of the onflowing stream of humanity of which we ourselves will some day be a part unconsciously, as we are consciously today.

These are some of the reflections that may accompany us every day we live as we think of those whose lives have warmed and strengthened us, and realize how great a multitude they really are, the vast majority of them unknown, yet living in the very humanity they were once living parts of. John Dewey once phrased it this way: "We who now live are parts of a humanity that extends into the remote past. . . . The things in civilization we most prize are not of ourselves. They exist by the grace of the doings and sufferings of the continuous human community in which we are a link." Then Dewey took a further step, without which the thought of our vast human indebtedness cannot be complete:

> Ours is the responsibility of conserving, transmitting, rectifying and expanding the heritage of values we have received that those who come after us may receive it more solid and secure, more widely accessible and more generously shared than we have received it. Here are all the elements for a religious faith that shall not be confined to sect, class, or race. Such a faith has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind.

This is the great and living truth which death can inspire: our lives point always to the future, when we ourselves shall become someone's heritage and influence, whether in ordinary personal memory or through the gift of some great thought, act, or decision that shall give a lasting grace to human life. If it is true that the past lives in us, then it is doubly true that the future is already present and being built through us, through the quality and character of our lives—the responsibility of which no man is free. "Do not act as if thou wert going to live ten thousand years," wrote Marcus Aurelius. "While thou livest, be good."

This is what death can really mean—tragedy and sorrow, of course, for there is no life without pain; the cutting short at times of what is joyous and promising—yes, for there is no perfection or completeness in human life. But above and beyond these partial views there is the great and healing truth that death in man's life is but an incident in the flowing process that has no beginning and no end—the majestic drama of natural existence whose scope we are but beginning to suspect, the drama in which each of us has his part to play and his responsibility to play well, strengthened by the immortal influences of those who have gone before, challenged by the hopes of generations yet unborn living in him.

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1955: Spinoza Brought Up to Date

DAVID GITTLEMAN

What was it in particular that turned the Biblical scholar anathema to his dogmatic yet well-meaning community, made him change his name from the good Hebrew Baruch (Blessed) to Benedictus, forced him to accept the hospitality and solitude of an attic in a Christian household, finally to emerge the God-intoxicated seeker after truth and wisdom, whose greatness soars with the passing of the centuries?

Benedictus de Spinoza (1632-1677) was a pioneer of humanity, a spiritual and ethical rebel who set out to re-evaluate accepted standards, using the yardstick of free research and reason. His aim was to understand, to ennoble, and to strengthen the moral character and ethical content of living man so as to make it possible for the growth of a humanity with dynamic spiritual discriminations. He looked upon man as a product of omnipresent godliness, with unlimited capacities for high idealism and noble emotions, disciplined by logic and a will-to-do-good. But he realized that man will never be true to himself until he actually lifts himself above those abominable practices which degrade his innate human and humane dignity. He was a lover of peace and freedom; but his inquisitive mind and yearning soul could not be appeased with ritual or mere freedom of the jungle. He felt that nations can be steered by means of precept and moral training to follow things that would lead to personal and universal edification. Well aware of man's wavering multiple personality and the recurring breakdown in the moral leadership of organized society, he held fast to the Talmudic adage that knowledge (Torah) is greater than priesthood and the royal purple; and he proceeded in bold strides to glean the best from the dry compost of a strife-infested past undermined by its own contradictions and ill practices.

Spinoza himself epitomized Lao-tse's principle in action, namely, that though he who overcomes others is strong, he who overcomes himself and his own unfavorable environment is indeed mighty. He could find evidence that within the mind of mortal man there are latent immortal divine ideas and aspirations capable of peaceably revolutionizing human society, and thus actually bring down closer to earth the prophetic vision of the Kingdom of a Loving God within reach of man. Joining the contemporary visionary, Spinoza too would plead that if it is possible for a man to reach out to the universe and draw down power to light our cities and homes, why can we not reach out into the same universe and draw out spiritual power to illuminate this world, to drive away the dark shadows of fear, prejudice, war, and economic troubles?

The humble polisher of lenses saw with his inner eye unity and love and beauty in the mechanics of the Cosmos, and wanted us all not to miss this thrilling experience of living a richer and nobler life triumphant. The Dutch philosopher would sympathize with the current verdict that the tragedy of life is not that men perish or lack the means, but that they cease to love—a sacred sentiment which is being replaced by a glamorous parody flashed as an ill substitute on the silver screen. It was the late Santayana who maintained from his ivory tower that man is not made to understand life, but to love it. It is to Spinoza's credit that he labored to fuse both understanding and love in the service of his fellow men for the greater glory of an omnipresent creative godliness. For in his own life, he replaced book-religion and church-religion with a life-religion or, as he himself phrased it—"the more things the mind knows, the better does it understand its own strength and the order of nature; by increased self-knowledge it can direct itself more easily and lay down rules for its own guidance and, by increased knowledge of nature, it can more easily avoid what is useless . . . the less men know of nature the more easily can they coin fictitious ideas."—*(On the Improvement of the Understanding.)* This bold approach to the general subject of cherished norms and prejudices was matched by a righteous zeal which formed the very essence of his monumental *Ethics.* Enlightenment is a virtue which carries its own rewards.

The ethical rebel challenged his elders and the status quo of the seventeenth century with the provocative declaration: "Man thinks."—*(Ethics);* and he labored to fuse phenomenal reality into an all-embracing dynamic moral pantheism. "Men who are governed by reason," he went on to explain, "that is, who seek what is useful to them in accordance with reason—desire for themselves nothing which they do not also desire for the rest of mankind, and, accordingly, are just, faithful and honorable in their conduct." Of course, the author of *Ethics* knew well that from the days of hoary antiquity, reaching out to the tragic much too plausible episode of fratricide with the murder of Abel, *homo sapiens* has been a wolf to man—*(Homo Homini Lupus);* hence his contention that faith must be more than a mere appeasing ritual of ancient custom. Religion must be steeped in the daily workings of fellowship, mutual helpfulness, and justice. For Spinoza the words "Do unto others as ye would men should do unto you" had a positive meaning, reflecting the actual way of life—the Will of God dedicated to the moral good of all mankind. In fact, he himself was permeated with Hillel's admonition: "Do not unto others what thou wouldest not they do unto thee." He thus pitched his warrior's tent in open battle against all tyranny, injustice, force, and dogmatic opinion. Aiming to sanctify and humanize the lot of mankind, he set the example by refusing to sell his own integrity for a conventional mess of pottage when tempted to do so.

Now, in the year of our Lord 1955, we hear again the familiar cry for the stronger arm; and the dreadfully ominous race is on—men and nations build power, more power, and are in a mad rush for a mightier balance of power. Spinoza, too, had a word for it. But his conception of "the stronger man" points to a course that would avert calamities and strife and would actually usher in the saner order of peaceful cooperation and mutual aid. Says Spinoza: "He that is strong hates no man, despises no man, and least of all things is proud . . . he strives before all things to conceive things as they really are and to remove the hindrances to true knowledge, such as are hatred, anger, envy, derision, pride and similar emotions . . .

he endeavors—as far as in him lies—to do good, and to go on his way rejoicing."—*(Ethics.)*

How up-to-date was the Dutch philosopher? It was for good reason that one of our greatest contemporary novelists has penned his sincere tribute to our subject when he confessed in his self-revealing soliloquy: "I look upon my first reading of Spinoza," says W. Somerset Maugham in *The Summing Up,* "as one of the signal experiences of my life. It filled me with just that feeling of majesty and exulting power that one has at the sight of a great mountain range." Indeed, to the thoughtful reader of today, Spinoza's course or blueprint to Utopia is no product of wishful thinking and fuzzy-minded optimism. His ethical aspirations and logic are in line with the aspirations and reasoning expressed by the foremost thinkers of modern times. "In a rational ethic," says Bertrand Russell in *Conquest of Happiness,* "it will be held laudable to give pleasure to anyone, even to oneself, provided there is no counter-balancing pain to oneself or to others. The ideally virtuous would be the man who permits the enjoyment of all good things whenever there is no consequence to outweigh the enjoyment."

Spinoza's humanitarian sentiments are best expounded by the ultra-modern Aldous Huxley in his Introduction to *Bhagavad—Gita* when he warns us that "there will never be enduring peace unless and until human beings come to accept a philosophy of life more adequate to the cosmic and psychological facts than the insane idolatries of nationalism and the advertising man's apocalyptic faith in Progress towards a mechanized New Jerusalem . . ." While the renowned British historian Arnold J. Toynbee places the seal of approval with a profound summation in effect that "it is our moral plight in our small atom-bomb haunted planet that makes our physical weapons dangerous" *(New York Times Magazine,* May 1, 1955), and again, that "mankind's success in bringing human conduct under the rule of ethics in practice has, so far, been very unequal in human affairs; in international relations we are living in a primitive age of anarchy."—*(New York Times Magazine,* May 29, 1955). But, as Professor Toynbee's distinguished countryman assures us in his credo, there is no room for pessimism. "Science can, if it chooses, enable our grandchildren to live the good life by giving them knowledge, self-control, and characters productive of harmony rather than strife." — (Bertrand Russell: *What I Believe.)*

Thus, throughout the ages, unbound by man-made frontiers and prejudices, there is a "network of loyalties held in common" which is dedicated to the Better Life, and which by its very nature is not utopian and cannot be diverted, destroyed, or halted by tyrannous assaults and misrepresentations. It is well at this point to recall the gentle words of the ancient sage: "Man is born good, but ignorance makes him bad; he knows no better. Let us have patience, let us teach him and make him better. Then we will have a better world." Even the great Disraeli had a word for it in his *Sybil:* We are all born for love. It is the principle of existence and its only end.

It is conceivable that Spinoza would agree then that the real dilemma of our twentieth century and what this Atomic Age now needs most is not bigger material structures of puffed-up pride, but more respect for the dignity of the humblest of human lives; more concern for the sacredness of all mothers' sons throughout this inhabited world; not more awe-inspiring mechanical monsters and gadgets and man-made heavenly satellites, but more security, more human kindness, more individual and collective happiness and peace.

Such was the faith and the vision of the prophets the world over, of the Nazarene, of the saintly Gandhi; such was also the faith and the vision of our own Founding Fathers, who braved to dream and dreaming boldly labored to bring closer to materialization a peace-loving Brotherhood of Free Men. It is left to the guardians of today and a revitalized unified religion of tomorrow to accept the challenge of this Atomic Age.

A Laboratory of Better Living*

LEONARD S. KENWORTHY

Adobe houses with the letters "D.D.T." painted on their side walls by insect control brigades, school children drinking milk from tin cups or gourds, experimental plots of sesame, castor beans, or some new variety of corn, coffee, or sugar cane, trenches being readied for new water pipes or sewage disposal conduits, and bulldozers scooping up the earth for new and enlarged airports—these are some of the signs of change taking place today in Central America.

The old picture of that region as an isthmus of frequent revolutions needs to be discarded or retouched. Upheavals there are at times, but even more radical changes are being made in the ways of life for the ten million humans in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. These five underdeveloped countries are undergoing a non-violent revolution which is far more significant than any of the violent revolts of the past or of recent days.

These nations differ greatly, but they have several common problems with which they are wrestling. They are trying to provide better transportation, better health and housing, better food and agriculture, better power and industrial development, and better education. These five goals have been adopted informally, just as long ago they adopted the five major volcanoes of Central America as a symbol.

Transport is vital where the backs of human beings or tiny two-wheeled carts drawn by oxen have served for centuries as the chief way of getting goods to market. In this part of the world a good highway or airport is of prime importance in raising the standards of living for the men and women whose average per capita income ranges from an annual $60 in Honduras to $146 in Costa Rica, compared to $1,425 per person in the United States.

Honduras has concentrated on air travel. She is the largest in area and the smallest in population, and her citizens are scattered. Her quickest and cheapest way of binding them together, of giving them contact with the outside world, and of affording them markets

*This report is based on first-hand observation, and is released by *Worldover Press.*

internally, has been through air transportation. Today there are seventy-five airports in Honduras.

El Salvador is working on a major highway across the southern part of its territory, with financial help from the International Bank of the United Nations; Guatemala is building up several roads fanning out from the capital. Costa Rica's greatest effort has gone into a new airport at El Coco, which enables more and larger planes to serve the Capital, San Jose. Through leadership of the Economic Commission for Latin America steps are taken to integrate the plans of all these nations for an overall Central American highway system. At the center of such a plan is the Pan American Highway, about 85 per cent finished.

In most of this planning the United States has played an important role, as also in construction, through technical help and through substantial sums of money for equipment and materials. But the interested countries themselves match the gifts from the United States and sometimes exceed them.

To anyone who cares about the lives of human beings, health conditions in large parts of Central America are shocking. For example, the average life expectancy in El Salvador is currently around 30 years—and the figures are similar for most of Central America. Water supplies are usually bad, infant mortality is very high, a large percentage of children suffer from intestinal parasites. Many pregnant women are ill with severe anemia.

But there is another side to the story, too. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N., the World Health Organization and its Latin American branch — the Pan American Sanitary Bureau — the United Nations Children's Fund, the Technical Assistance program of the U.N., and other groups, are vitally concerned. And for those who are skeptical about local governments pulling their own oars, the fact should be underlined with heavy pencil lines that they are. El Salvador for example increased its public health appropriations from 200,000 *colones* in 1940 to 3,300,000 *colones* in 1953. Few if any governments in the world could show comparable support for better conditions. Nicaragua allotted $128,160 in 1953-54 for child feeding programs, a sum which represents more than the entire budget of the Health Ministry five years ago.

The work of UNICEF in child feeding has been outstanding. At the height of its program, in 1952, it was feeding dried milk to 300,000 boys and girls, largely through the schools. That was a feat in itself. More important in the long run, however, is the effect UNICEF has had in stimulating national governments and private groups to carry on such work by themselves.

In Honduras sixty water systems have been built in the last eleven years with the help of the Point Four program and its predecessors. The extent of the campaign against malaria, one of the worst scourges, may be gained from the figures of June, 1953, in Honduras, where 4,000 homes were sprayed with D.D.T.

Central America is of course the center of banana and coffee plantations, and large sections of the population are dependent for their cash income on one crop. Thus one major task is to diversify agriculture. Another is to halt erosion and promote soil conservation. A third is to find more protein products to supplement the heavy diet of corn and beans. A fourth is to improve the domestic animals. Progress is being made in all these directions. Cotton output has substantially increased, especially in Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Rice production has had a big spurt in all the countries, with output in Nicaragua during 1951-52 twenty-five times that of 1947-48.

Guatemala has undertaken a reforestation program, and a locust control program in Honduras has made headway, both sparked by the F.A.O. Contour farming and irrigation are spreading, and the use of hay machinery has brought progress, especially in Costa Rica. Animal diseases are being studied and checked. The Institute of Nutrition for Central America and Panama, in cooperation with F.A.O., W.H.O. and UNICEF, is moving ahead with surveys of food habits and experimenting with ways to increase the protein content of food, for this is the greatest diet deficiency for most persons. Iodine content in food is essential to prevent endemic goiter, which is prevalent, and ways of utilizing iodine are being found.

Power for homes and factories is one of the many needs in modern nations, but unfortunately Central America lacks coal, oil, and gas. However, it does have a few rivers which are suitable for producing electricity. The most important single project recently has been the task of harnessing the Lempe River in El Salvador, the largest river in the isthmus. This is the culmination of a years'-old dream, and has been aided by the U.N. International Bank. Sometimes called the T.V.A. of Central America, it may well transform the whole central part of El Salvador. It will supply electrical power, provide water for irrigation, and probably lead to a wider diversification of industry than has hitherto been possible.

In Costa Rica a similar project is under way to dam that country's Rio Grande at La Garita, west of San José. Plans are under way for a second hydroelectric plant at the Reventazon, east of the capital. Plans drawn for Nicaragua call for a 25 per cent increase in farm and industrial production within five years. Dried milk plants, so valuable for children, are being built or will soon be in prospect. Small industries are gradually developing. In Costa Rica factories have been started for making matches, glassware, industrial yeast, shoes, sugar refining, and for canning tuna and pineapples. In El Salvador two cement plants and a shoe factory, turning out 1,000 pairs a day, have recently been opened.

Illiteracy is still very high in this part of the world. Recent figures are difficult to obtain and often unreliable, but the estimates indicate only 30 to 35 per cent literacy in most of these countries, with about 20 per cent in Guatemala and 75 to 80 per cent in Costa Rica. No major campaigns against illiteracy are under way which compare with the ones in Mexico or Turkey a few years ago, but slow progress can be reported. More than a year ago, Guatemala was the scene of some promise with its system based on twenty pilot or demonstration institutions and some twenty other schools grouped around each of these.

Sensing the need of vocational training, several of the countries are seeking to improve industrial and pre-vocational education. Plans for a new school have been drafted by an American working under Point Four in El Salvador, and a Swiss educator has done a similar job in Costa Rica under UNESCO. In Honduras a vocational school has been started at Catacamas, for agriculture, paid for by the government, but

promoted by the Institute of Inter-American Cooperation. Teacher education has also claimed the attention of these nations. Wisely, they have begun to develop rural training centers to encourage young men and women to teach in the outlying areas and to obtain their training in such neighborhoods. Work along these lines has been progressing in Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

The two chief agricultural schools in this whole region are the Pan American School of Agriculture in Honduras, sponsored by the United Fruit Company, and the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences in Costa Rica, opened in 1944, and affiliated with the Organization of American States.

These examples of evolutionary change illustrate the social, economic, and educational revolution now occurring in these five neighbor nations of Central America. Each of these examples may mean little by itself, but taken as a whole they augur well for the improvement of life in a small but increasingly important segment of our present-day world.

The Religionists Make "One World" Difficult

JOHN MALICK

As it looks from this Ohio town there are three trends that must alarm those who know about them. The first is the number working against public schools. This strikes at the base of our kind of life for the *nation*. The second is the number hacking away at the United Nations. This strikes at the top, our last hope for the *planet*. The third is the divorce of Christian theology, which is practically a give-away program, and Christian ethics that makes heavy demands in practice.

All these are moving along, even snowballing. All have their propaganda on a large scale, with the mass media of communication on their side. Most Americans would be disturbed if they knew the extent of these trends. We see three newspapers from two states, eight or ten widely read magazines and hear what comes over radio and television. From all these sources one would hardly suspect that such movements are going on. All that we know about them is from a half-dozen critical publications of small circulation. We doubt if fifty people in this county see them. While all these trends are devastatingly important they are not news while they are creeping along to their ends. They seldom emerge into the light of news and free discussion. Newspapers generally do not touch them. These trends run into the rule against raising religious controversy among the readers. In a letter to a newspaper we summarized a national survey of those working against the public schools, the ecclesiastical, business, tax reduction, superpatriot, and white supremacy groups. All these names were deleted in the letter as published in the "Readers' Column."

Few know how many of the churches are against the public school kind of knowledge. Logically, all Christian churches should be against it. The public schools have to stick to their regular kind of knowledge in contradistinction to the revelation kind, which from the standpoint of the schools is not knowledge at all. All the churches are quite right about this fear of exposing their doctrines to the public schools. A number of churches see this and would like to educate their own as proper church members rather than as proper citizens. If Federal funds are made available for church schools, a considerable number of children would be withdrawn from the public schools.

Against the schools are the business groups whose chief objection is the cost. Those in the upper income brackets, like those sending to parochial schools, do not use the public schools anyway and naturally object to supporting them. Both the business and church groups keep representatives on the school boards for the sole purpose of watching the budget. The superpatriots are against progressive educators. The white supremacy advocates would rather not have schools at all than to have them open to Negroes with equal opportunities in the same room.

Universal education has never been universally popular. Educating all seemed quite preposterous at first. How would such people know their place in the social scheme and keep it? They would be more difficult to use profitably and to manage easily. Those engaged in large scale printing usually have not wished educated readers. Run the list in the drug stores and at the newsstands in the hotels. More highly educated readers would lessen this demand to the point of bankruptcy. There is no insistent demand for educated voters. Both parties just now are worried about what to do with Suburbia. They have learned to read, moved out from the wards where they stayed put, to the suburbs where they are quite out of control. Many lines of profitable activity depend upon the gullibility of easy believers. That is, public schools have precarious standing. At first they were looked upon as Social Security and Old Age Pensions are now. There was no obligation for us to do that much for people. Educating a person does do something to him. He is never quite the same again. The chances are he is never quite as easy to pluck and to plunder.

Even in the field where most of the jobs are, there seems to be less and less demand for the schools to help prepare the jobholders. For an increasing number, what education they have cannot be used in their work. They might do their work better with *less* education, at least be more contented. Many employers from the standpoint of their business have little interest in public schools. They prefer to train their own for their own purpose which is not an all-round education such as the democratic state has to have. The demands of employment more and more remind one of Huxley's *Brave New World,* Orwell's *1984,* and Bertrand Russell's *The Scientific Outlook.* That is, education for the job now is much less than the state has to have for its citizens. The pressure against public schools is just naturally strong with all these demands for undiscriminating readers, voters, customers, patients, clients, pewholders, laborers, listeners on the air, and watchers on the screen.

The most aggressive and effective opponent of the public school now goes under the name of Catholic Action. In the United States this movement has just arrived at open and vocal opposition to schools. This change of Catholic status is evidenced by greater influ-

ence in the political field and by the rapid increase of parochial schools. In country communities in the United States this generation is seeing the first division of the school population on purely religious grounds. Asking for state support of church schools is new only in the United States. Such support is about normal for Europe. Catholicism in the United States always has been, and still is, a minority. Some of the first colonial settlements planned not to have either Anglicans or Catholics. They tried to keep both church and political forms in Europe from being repeated in the new country. Emerson and Whitman later objected to having the European literary forms repeated here. In the American tradition from the first, the least desirable import from Europe was the Catholic Church. In the opinion of the founding fathers and of most Americans since, it had been a liability for Europe. There for centuries Catholicism told all other religionists what they could and could not do. In the United States the rule was reversed. Catholics were on the receiving end and were told what they could do which was much less than they were accustomed to do in Europe. Catholicism recently has increased in the United States to the status of pressure and trading value in Washington and in the State Legislatures.

Few elected persons depend wholly upon a Catholic constituency, as in some countries, but all politicians now are conscious of the number of Catholics in their Protestant constituencies. Both Protestants and Catholics claim absolute knowledge in the religious field. Protestants are not organized for ecclesiastical power influence. Catholicism recently has maneuvered itself into favorable position for fighting Protestants. They have been looking for this opportunity for the last four hundred years. With absolute knowledge in the religious field, Catholicism is fighting the only other absolute knowledge system, the Russian, which makes like claim in the economic field. Reformed Communists naturally find sanctuary with the Catholic group that offers absolute theological certainty in lieu of the absolute economic certainty the Communist has just left.

In the Washington setup the examination of Communists now is conducted by those who have the double function of spearheading Catholic Action and challenging the loyalty of Federal employees and other citizens. This gives those who leave Communism for Catholicism a favored position as reputable witnesses. Their veracity is taken for granted and not questioned. All other witnesses start with the count against them. They have the burden of proof that they are telling the truth. A trustworthy correspondent of one of the most trustworthy newspapers has just announced his findings as to the church connection of those who have lost their jobs as a result of being questioned about their loyalty. He finds that 80 per cent of them are Protestants. They are out permanently and are replaced by Catholics. The 20 per cent challenged who are Catholics are dropped only temporarily and then quietly reinstated. This correspondent reports that he is looking for a Catholic who has been adversely affected in the hearings of the Washington Committees. It looks like the real interest is in doing something to Protestants rather than to Communists. This naturally would be so. This is the first time that Catholicism ever has had the chance in the United States to oppose Protestants openly on patriotic grounds. Catholic propaganda already has gone far in crediting Catholics with the work of the founding fathers who for the most part were not believers in the Christian doctrines.

It would seem that the political stage is now set for Protestants in the United States unless they wish their country to go the way of Europe and of most of the territory south of the Rio Grande. Liberals naturally make no brief for the theology of either Protestants or Catholics. Their doctrinal differences are slight. Liberals' only interest at present is in the numerical voting strength of Protestants in the oncoming struggle for the public schools and other American ways. Liberals were opposed to the Methodist Action power drive when it went out to dominate in matters outside strictly Methodist Church affairs. Catholic Action goes very much farther in making Catholic practices the laws of the state for all. Increasingly, many Americans are looking upon Christian theology as a social liability whether in the form it takes up the cove, in the Bible belt, or giving increased respectability to the group now in power in Washington. It is becoming evident how much can be done against the country under religious liberty statutes. There is no call to have this liberty a blanket of protection to cover *all* the ambitious projects of ecclesiastical power.

The second trend that must trouble those who know about it, is the number in active opposition to the United Nations. More and more those who favor it are looked upon as the realists rather than the star-gazers. The overall picture is that the Western Hemisphere can present a civilian front of 225 million. Ten per cent of the population is the number required for military purposes. This would give the Western Hemisphere 23 million in fighting strength. Russia with all her connections has a civilian front of 800 million, with 80 million available for military use. That is, the Communists are betting their 800 million civilians against the West's 225 million. The United Nations is the grand alliance of the planet, buttressed by a number of interlocking alliances. It is within the realm of easy possibility that but for the United Nations the West would find itself standing alone, naked to the rest of the world. A. A. Berle, Jr., observes: "The United Nations is a pain in the neck to the Kremlin. It can neither be crushed entirely by Russia nor broken up." Writing before the death of Stalin, Berle continues: "All Stalin needs is a group of Americans shortsighted enough to do his work for him."

The third trend is the increased importance of Christian theology and what it is said to do, and the decreased importance of Christian ethics, what people do to each other. This divorce is most noticeable in the changed attitude of American Christians towards Asiatics. At one time sending missionaries to Asia was an all-American activity. It was the only form of international interest. It was wholly a matter of Christian theology, getting to them to save their souls before they died. It was represented as demanding great haste in getting there with the only religion that knows about their lost condition. Unfortunately, Asia's own religions do not tell them about this. The missionaries did educational and medical work along with giving the theology, but such work was only of secondary importance. This interest in Asiatics went far down in the rural population, into the very homes from which the soldiers fighting in Asia come now. Any rural youth in the United States, of any degree of cultivation or lack of it, felt entirely competent to tell any Asiatic, of any degree of cultivation, about his lost condition. This belief in all Asia being lost was the very nerve of missionary activity. Now American Christians read

of thousands of Asiastics being killed in war without seeming much concerned about where they go after they are dead. It would be interesting to know where American Christians now think they *do* go. This at one time was American Christians' sole concern for the fate of Asia.

The United Nations is an all-planet effort to implement Christian ethics rather than Christian theology. The United Nations looks like, sounds like, is most like the Kingdom of God about which Jews and Christians have talked so much. Christian theology is divisive in its effects in Asia, Asiatic religions not knowing of this particular saving scheme. But Christian ethics in its high reaches for the peace and well-being of all people is quite familiar to Asiatics through their native religions. Getting together on Christian ethics would bring them together as Christian theology keeps them apart. In the field of ethics all major religions could be quite at home together. It is really quite shocking to see with what indifference Americans now read of the destruction of these people in large numbers. They are the same people Christians were in such haste to reach two generations ago. It would seem that all Christians would be *bound* to be interested in the United Nations which is organized to do what is most important on most of the pages of the Western book of Scripture. Doing things *for* people who need it seems to be the Bible test for both Jews and Christians. Certainly if people anywhere need a lot done for them, it is these Asiatics now. If Christians want something right in their line, here it is.

The surprising thing is the number of Christians that have little interest in the United Nations or are actively against it even under the Christian name. The largest, oldest, and most power-hungry group of Christians are against it and logically so. This group of Christians claim the only body of truth that is good for the planet. They claim also cosmic authorization to administer this truth in their own way. That is, they claim both absolute truth and infallible direction in making this truth the rule for the whole human race. Such a body naturally looks upon the United Nations as a rival. The United Nations, too, has for *its* purpose to organize the nations for their good. It differs from the church group in that it asks consent of all who come within its rule. Again, it differs in that it makes no claim to absolute knowledge or infallible direction of its activities. The United Nations claims only the ordinary everyday kind of knowledge. This it would apply in a much larger way for the good of all nations, especially those who need it most.

It is as would be expected that Catholic Action is the most powerful and resourceful enemy of the United Nations. It is using its entire strength to put its most serious rival out of world affairs. Both the totalitarian economic group and the totalitarian theological group by necessity are hostile to the United Nations which has a democratic setup, with authorization fed up from the bottom rather than forced down from the top. All American Christians and those not Christian would be against the Russian totalitarianism in the field of economic theory. It is unfortunate and confusing to have the only other totalitarian group, Catholic Action, representing itself as the only savior of the nations. In the light of long history and of the present, there is not much choice between totalitarian economic speculation and totalitarian theological speculation. Those forced to feel the guiding hand of either one may be equally hurt. At most, the United Nations is concerned with the highest good of all the people of the world. It is based wholly on what men on their own can know and can do. This gives more confidence than the claim to infallible knowledge and cosmic direction. The United Nations is concerned with most kinds of salvation, those known in the books as the sociological kinds. The need of such salvation is tragically urgent after the long rule of the religionists' kind of salvation in the countries where most of the human race are.

A rapidly growing body of Christians are the Protestant sects going under the name "Holiness." These are the last splinter sects of a continuously dividing Protestantism. They represent very little in the way of ecclesiastical power, political and social pressure. They have no feeling that the United Nations is a rival in putting the earth in order. They have practically no interest in social change or reform. They have gone back to interest in Christian theology almost exclusively. They say that living conditions are relatively unimportant compared with the saved soul. Their claim is that people living in very bad social conditions can be saved, and just as much saved as those in better conditions. They say that man is not to be here very long anyway, not *long* enough to put the earth in order if it made any difference.

The Christian theology they have revived includes belief that the end of the world is near. As true believers they think that at this world's end they will benefit so richly that the best living conditions here would not seem attractive. This group sticks very closely to the tragic literature of the Bible that tells of the suffering of the Jews when they were being pressed by the nations, and the suffering of the early Christians when they were being persecuted by the Romans. A half-dozen Bible books of prophetic and crisis nature are taken as applying to the present world situation. These prophecies for an earlier day are taken as God's program for the nations now. This makes the United Nations quite superfluous. They believe that all that happens now is being directed personally by God anyway for his own special ends which are not man's worldly ends or the program of the United Nations. This group has not been caught up with the vision of Christian ethics made effective for the first time for the whole human race by a united world.

This Holiness group *does* make Christian ethics important in their personal conduct. They are very particular about not indulging in the smaller vices which disturb churches so much. This group has revived the Christian belief in reaching such stability in being good that one cannot sin. It is the doctrine of acquiring the sinless state. This has no great social effect in the United States. Those with ambition to acquire this sinless condition are not in position to practice the larger vices that affect most people, such as housing, rent, wages, and prices. Ambition to reach this sinless state might have very wide effect for good if it should take hold of those exercising the most industrial and political power who for the most part are not restrained very much by Christian ethics. They pay lip service to Christian theology as it is held in the more decorous churches that hold both their theology and their ethics temperately.

Besides the large Christian body going out for ecclesiastical power, the Holiness sects of the more underprivileged and the privileged Christians in power, there are all the conventional Christians in the wide

rural stretches and the hundreds of American villages. These Christians usually hold the party lines on such matters as the United Nations. For the most part their churches do not give them instructions in such public matters. Many of them are in a state of revival all the year. More and more American Christians are getting only theology on Sunday. The United Nations is not thought of as a part of the Christian message and service. The United Nations gets little support from the Protestant clergy. If they are informed about it and know enough to know that it belongs to their Christian ethics, they are deterred by the rabble-rousing fundamentalist clergy around them conducting revivals and by those in their pews affected by the politicians opposing the United Nations for their own purposes.

All kinds of liberals are finding fewer media open to them whether in print or by voice. If any liberal conviction can be connected in the remotest way with the Communist name it is damned by the association. The ideas about a God held by liberals and all who confine themselves to the evidence are practically a denial of the God of the fundamentalists, both Protestant and Catholic. There is much talk of getting back to God by which is meant the Being of the conventions and the clichés who has the press and the air at present. There are no liberal writers or speakers now of comparable range and influence with the Catholic Action and other fundamentalist writers and speakers. Their God is more and more becoming the only correct view, with all other views suspect. Not to be for this cliché God is to be godless, for which the proper name is said to be atheism. This at once suggests godless Communism and the most is made of it by those who have to produce copy every day and do their stint on the air. The most respectable representatives among the liberals of recent years are now listed as subversives. The representation is that what they say about a Divine Being is about like the Communist denial of God. A number of voices of wide range now would make the liberalism of even the Unitarian and Humanist kinds dangerous enough to be made illegal. There are no voices of comparable range talking sense and toleration. The press and the air are almost completely closed to such voices. The new inquisition, surprisingly on the old European model, is well on its way in the United States.

This situation merits wide discussion in the press and on the air but these are almost entirely in the hands of the various orthodoxies, theological, political, and economic. They are all scared and are uniting for defense. There is no way for large-scale publication of any kind of liberalism in any field. This puts heavy obligation on everyone to tell what he knows of the situation to any group however small. After all, every kind of liberalism started as a minority heresy. The major movements now indicate that most of the gain made has to be won over again. There is a saying about vigilance being the regular price charged for all the freedoms against all the fears.

Omar Khayyám and Abu'l'Ala

HARRY TAYLOR

I have loved Omar too long to desert him now. As a youth his quatrains, as rendered by FitzGerald, were music to my ears and pabulum for my budding oratory. There was a kind of confraternity of us in those early days who knew we belonged because of the gusto with which we could quote Omar.

But Omar the Persian was really only a second-rate poet; his real fame in his native land was as a mathematician and calendar reviser. It was FitzGerald who arranged his verses, substituted and even added thoughts of his own, and gave to the world the quatrains we love.

Omar, by the way, had a rather easy life with his pension from the Vizier and his astronomy. At Nishapur he led a kind of ideal existence with no worries to bother him.

Abu'l'Ala, on the other hand, was a great poet and philosopher in his own right. He was born some forty odd years before Omar, and quite probably his fame spread as far as Nishapur. The date of his birth was 974, in a small village named Märrah, near Aleppo. His real name was Ahmed ibn Abdallah ibn Soleiman. Abu'l'Ala, which means "the father of the sublime," was the name given to him by his many disciples and admirers.

Shadows fell on Abu's life very early. He was smitten with smallpox when he was five, leaving him horribly disfigured and with the seeds of blindness. Little is known of his early life except that his father taught him to read and gave him a love of learning. While in his early twenties, and possibly before total blindness came upon him, he spent some two years in Bagdad and mixed with the leading Sufis, scholars, and scientists of his age. After his Bagdad sojourn he went back to his native village and remained there until he died.

Abu'l'Ala called himself "a recluse in two prisons"; one was his self-imposed solitude and the other his blindness. Ibn Khollekan, whom Rihani calls the Plutarch of Arabia, has this picture of Abu'l'Ala in his *Lives of Eminent Men.*

> Abn Mohammed Abdallah tells me that he visited him [Abu'l'Ala] once with his uncle, and found him sitting on an old hair matting. He was very old, and the disease that attacked him in his boyhood had left deep traces on his emaciated face. He asked me to come near him, and blessed me as he laid his hand on my head. I was a boy then and I can picture him before me now. I looked into his eyes, and remember well how the one was horribly protruding and the other completely buried in its socket and could not be seen.

It was said of him that he was sulky and pessimistic but that those who came to him for advice were greeted with a smile and went away feeling that they had received a benediction. Because of his blindness he developed a phenomenal memory and amazed all who came in contact with him because of the facility with which he could repeat long quotations from his favorite authors. He was like Albert Schweitzer in his respect and reverence for all forms of life. He would eat no meat and indeed thought that it was a sin to kill even the smallest insect.

Kindly though he was, however, Abu'l'Ala always said what he believed regardless of consequences and thereby incurred the hatred of the orthodox of his

day. Many honors were bestowed upon him but he preferred to remain in his obscure village which, as the years passed, became a Mecca for pupils and admirers even outside his own country.

When he died at the age of eighty-four, we are told that there were present round his grave more than one hundred and eighty poets, and that he was eulogized by eighty-four speakers, among whom were the foremost doctors, scholars, and writers of his time.

There are two translations of Abu'l'Ala's poems into English. One is entitled *The Quatrains of Abu'l'Ala,* by Ameen F. Rihani, published by Doubleday, Page and Company in 1903; the other is entitled *The Diwan of Abu'l'Ala,* by Henry Baerlein, published by John Murray of London in 1908.

Both these poets have had to translate Abu'l'Ala in much the same way as FitzGerald translated Omar Khayyám, except that both Rihani and Baerlein seem to have more faithfully portrayed what their poet actually said. Here is what Rihani writes in his preface:

> As for the translation of these chosen quatrains, let me say at the outset that it is almost impossible to adhere to the letter and convey the meaning without being insipid, dull, and even ridiculous at times. There being no affinity between the Arabic and the English languages, their standards of art and beauty widely differ, and in the process of transformation the outer garment at times must necessarily be doffed. I have always, however, adhered to the spirit and preserved the native imagery where it was not too clannish and grotesque.

Rihani is of the opinion that Omar Khayyám was a disciple or imitator of Abu'l'Ala. He writes: "I do not say that Omar was a plagiarist, but I say this: Just as Voltaire, for instance, acquired most of his liberal and skeptical views from Hobbes, Locke and Bayle, so did Omar acquire his from Abu'l'Ala."

Here is one of Abu'l'Ala's quatrains as translated by Rihani:

> Our nights and days around each other spin,
> And we like Planets end as we begin;
> Our feet are on the heads of those that passed,
> And as the Cradle cries, the Graves all grin.

Here we see that Abu'l'Ala's reputation as a pessimist was not without foundation. This verse also reminds us of Omar, who came after Abu'l'Ala.

There is a tenderness underneath Abu'l'Ala's sullenness that is lacking in Omar. Here is Henry Baerlein's translation:

> If I have harbored love within my breast,
> 'Twas for my comrades of the dusty day,
> Who with me watched the loitering stars at play,
> Who bore the burden of the same unrest.

Or again from Baerlein:

> I never look upon the placid plain
> But I must think of those who lived before,
> And gave their quantities of sweat and gore,
> And went and will not travel back again.

Omar was more or less a pleasure-seeker but Abu'l'Ala all his life practiced the strictest asceticism and seemed at times to be struggling with his lower self. Here is a quatrain translated by Rihani:

> Like all of us, I, too, do lie and cheat,
> And hope to mend, before my death I meet;
> But Time cries out, "Make haste and purge thy soul,
> Tomorrow's dawn thou mayst not live to greet.

Here is a verse translated by Rihani that reminds us of Omar:

> Tread lightly, for a thousand hearts unseen
> Might now be beating in the misty green;
> Here are the herbs that once were pretty cheeks,
> Here the remains of those that once have been.

Abu'l'Ala will have none of the prating sects, thereby arousing an animosity that followed him all his days. Here are two quatrains of Rihani's:

> To all humanity, Oh consecrate
> Thy heart, and shun the thousand sects that prate
> About the things they little know about—
> Let all receive thy pity, love, or hate.

> These Superstitions, Secret Books, and Creeds,
> These Cults and Myths and other noxious Weeds—
> So many Lies are crowned, in every age,
> While Truth beneath the tyrant's heel still bleeds.

Abu'l'Ala was a lifelong vegetarian and had a keen sympathy for the beasts of the field. Here from Rihani:

> Hunt not the beast: O, be thou more humane,
> Since hunter here nor hunted long remain;
> The smallest grub a life has in it which
> Thou canst not take without inflicting pain.

Lonely and solitary, Abu'l'Ala loved his staff, as this quatrain from Rihani indicates:

> The blind man's staff is faithful, sound and true,
> Unlike the friends and guides who round him drew!
> Come, then, thou dumb and silent piece of oak,
> No son of Eve shall walk with me and you.

Even as you and I, Abu'l'Ala at times lifted up lame hands of faith and cried in anguish to the Eternal. How modern is his cry. Here again are two quatrains from Rihani:

> If miracles were wrought in bygone years,
> Why not today, why not today, O seers?
> This Leprous Age, aye, needs a healing hand.
> Why heed not then his cries and dry his tears?

> How many like us, in the ages past
> Have blindly soared, tho like a pebble cast,
> Seeking the veil of Mystery to tear,
> And fell accursed 'neath the burning blast?

Abu'l'Ala, according to Henry Baerlein's translation, bids us radiantly acquiesce in a fate we cannot evade:

> He was the glazier out of Erzerum,
> Whose wizardry would make the children cry—
> There will be no such wizardry when I
> Am broken by the chariot-wheels of Doom.

> The chariot-wheels of Doom! Now, hear them roll
> Across the desert and the noisy mart,
> Across the silent places of your heart—
> Smile on the driver you will not cajole.

This final quatrain from Rihani, where Abu'l'Ala bids us be strong and greet the Unseen valiantly whatever it may be:

> Thou art the creature of thy Present Age,
> Thy past is an obliterated Page;
> The rest that follows may not see thee more,
> Make best of what is worst and do not rage.

The one hundred and nineteen quatrains of Henry Baerlein and the one hundred and twenty-six quatrains of Rihani are far too many to pick out even the gems in an article such as this. Lovers of Omar, however, may want to look up these two translations. Rihani's may be out of print, but John Murray of London has a little volume, *The Diwan of Abu'l'Ala,* by Henry Baerlein for two shillings and sixpence.

Western Unitarian Conference

700 Oakwood Boulevard, Chicago 15, Illinois
RANDALL S. HILTON, Executive Secretary

MARTIN LUTHER FILM

The 16 mm. sound, color film of Martin Luther is now available through the Western Conference Office. Churches, Fellowships, and affiliated organizations may secure its use by contributing ten dollars to the Conference. The film is excellent for discussion or money-raising purposes.

WE SING AND SPEAK OF LIFE

The first edition of *We Sing of Life* has been sold out. A limited second edition is being bound with *We Speak of Life,* the speaking voice material prepared by Vincent Silliman to go with *We Sing of Life. We Sing of Life* sells for $3.00. The combined volume has been underwritten by the Western Unitarian Conference and will sell for $3.75. There are no discounts on either of these volumes. Order now through the Western Unitarian Conference Office.

GENEVA 1956

Registrations are now being received for the 1956 Geneva Summer Assembly. The dates: June 24 to 30. The place: College Camp. There will be a full program of outstanding merit for Religious Education, Fellowships, Worship, Music, Alliance, and General Interests. Send registration ($5) to Mrs. Esther L. Heinrich, 132 North Menard, Chicago 44, Illinois.

R. E. INSTITUTE

The Religious Education Institute for church school superintendents and directors will have an enrollment limited to thirty participants. At last report there were twenty-seven registered. There is room for three more. After that a waiting list will be maintained in case of cancellations. If you want your superintendent or R. E. director to attend, send $30 ($5 registration fee, $25 tuition fee) to Mrs. G. Richard Kuch, 5652 Kenwood Ave., Chicago 37, Illinois.

AROUND THE CONFERENCE

Abraham Lincoln Area—The annual meeting was held in Alton, Illinois, October 14-15. Four workshops featured the program. Banquet speaker: Dr. Thaddeus B. Clark, St. Louis. Moderator: Mr. Seichi Konzo, 510 McKinley St., Champaign, Illinois.

Iowa Unitarian Association—Annual meeting held in Iowa City, October 21-23. Featured speakers: Dr. A. Powell Davies, Washington, D. C., and Paul Blanshard. Officers: President, Victor R. Seymour, Lincoln, Nebraska; Vice-President, Dr. John Cowley, Cedar Falls, Iowa; Secretary, Rev. John W. Brigham, 2508 Jackson St., Sioux City, Iowa; and Treasurer, Frank Helm, Sioux City, Iowa.

Minnesota Conference—Annual meeting held at the Minneapolis Unitarian Church. Featured speaker: Emmet McLaughlin, author of *People's Padre.* President: Rev. Kenneth J. Smith, 3531 East First St., Duluth, Minnesota.

North Central Area—The Sauk City, Wisconsin, Fellowship entertained the North Central Area's first annual meeting, October 15. Featured speaker: Rev. Erwin Gaede, South Bend, Indiana. Officers: Ernst C. Wallau, President; Mrs. J. P. Lichtenheld, 822 Assembly Place, Dixon, Illinois, Secretary; and Walter Lewis, Rockford, Illinois, Treasurer.

Rocky Mountain Conference—Annual meeting held in the Denver, Colorado, Unitarian Church. Featured speaker: Rev. Carl Storm, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Officers: Rev. William Robinson, Jr., minister, Denver Universalist Church, President; Mr. W. H. Bostrom, Ft. Collins, Colorado, Vice-President; Mr. George Williams, Colorado Springs, Secretary; and Mrs. Betty Knox, Denver, Treasurer.

Chicago Area—The annual banquet was postponed from November to January 20, 1956. The featured speaker will be Dr. George G. Stoddard. Officers: President, Harry Jones, All Souls Church; Secretary, June Sark, Third Church; Treasurer, Bernard Heinrich, Third Church.

Ohio Valley Conference—A planning meeting was held in Cincinnati on November 13. Plans were made for a spring meeting to be held in Indianapolis in March. Officers: Rev. L. Wendell Hughes, Dayton, President; Rev. Lewis McGee, Yellow Springs, Vice-President; Mrs. Margery Fischer, First Unitarian Church, 6 Linton St., Cincinnati, Secretary; and Mr. Earl Alpiger, Louisville, Kentucky, Treasurer.

Michigan Area—New By-Laws are in the process of ratification by the Churches and Fellowships of the Michigan Area. Officers: President, John H. Morgan, Flint; Vice-President, Edward H. Redman, Ann Arbor; Secretary, Mrs. Francis Hughes, 14856 Ward, Detroit 27; and Treasurer, Donald Campbell, Ann Arbor.

UNITARIAN SERVICE COMMITTEE

Special city-wide drives for the Service Committee have been conducted this Fall by the churches in Chicago, Detroit, and St. Louis. Many other local churches have conducted Service Committee Campaigns. Dr. Frank Glick, Director of the Unitarian Service Committee, has spoken in Chicago, Cincinnati, Detroit, Madison, and St. Louis.

UNITED UNITARIAN APPEAL

February is "Appeal Month." Churches and Fellowships which have not already conducted their Appeal Campaigns are requested to do so during February. Miss Josephine Brayton, Field Worker for the United Appeal, has been touring the Western Conference during November and December. She has visited Cincinnati, Louisville, Chicago, Springfield, Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Madison, Des Moines, and Kansas City. "Let's face the facts" and give generously. A day's pay for the U.U.A.

ANNUAL MEETING

Plans are under way for a most interesting annual meeting. It will be held in Madison, Wisconsin, April 20-22, 1956. The Ministers' Institute will begin on April 19. If you have not seen the beautiful Frank Lloyd Wright church in Madison, this is your opportunity to do so.

INSTALLATION

The Rev. John Fordon was installed as minister of Eliot Chapel and Associate Minister of the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis, Wednesday, November 9. Participants in the service included Dr.

Thaddeus B. Clark, minister of the First Church; the chairmen of the boards of First Church and Eliot Chapel; Rev. Randall S. Hilton, who gave the charge to the Congregation; Dr. Robert Raible, Dallas, who gave the charge to the minister; and Rev. Arnold Westwood who preached the installation sermon.

125TH ANNIVERSARY

The First Unitarian Church of Louisville, Kentucky, celebrated its 125th anniversary, Sunday November 27, 1955. Rev. Randall S. Hilton, Secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference, preached the anniversary sermon on Sunday morning. At the evening service, the address was given by Mr. William Roger Greeley, Moderator of the American Unitarian Association. Mr. Alexander Booth, Chairman of the Board, gave a short history of the church. Rev. Theodore Hemplemann brought greetings from the Clifton Unitarian Church of Louisville, Dr. Paul Stauffer from the Protestant community, and Rabbi Joseph Rauch from the Jewish community. There is a stained glass window in the First Church, Louisville, dedicated to Rabbi Rauch. The services were conducted by the minister, Rev. Robert Weston.

HOW TO JOIN A UNITARIAN CHURCH (?)

There are many similarities but no uniformity in the methods and procedures of joining Unitarian Churches. Here is a paragraph taken from *Natural Religion*, a monthly publication of the Du Page Valley Unitarian Church, Naperville, Illinois.

"How" to Join This Church. We do not vote candidates into membership. Membership is by personal choice, but you are expected to (1) attend morning worship five times, (2) sign card that you are in agreement with the preamble and constitution (stressing freedom), (3) attend two orientation sessions."

The minister of the Du Page Valley Church is the Rev. Eugene W. Kreves.

The opposite of this is the church whose By-laws require that an applicant for membership be approved by the Membership Committee, The Board of Trustees, The Minister, sign the membership roll, and be welcomed at a public service.

FROM HERE AND THERE

Quincy—An article in the *Quincy Unitarian* on "Christmas is Kris Kringle Clanging Cash Registers?" concluded: "Christmas is a time for humility, and storekeepers might humbly remember that religion is not an instrument of huckstering, that the people of a city are more than customers, that the merchants are the servants of the people, and that Christmas comes but once a year, December 25th."

Colorado Springs—The new educational addition to the church was dedicated on November 11. Besides providing excellent church school facilities, the new building also includes a modern kitchen.

Rockford—A series of Sunday evening seminars is planned. They will deal with questions about the Bible, the Trinity, Humanism, Theism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Chicago, People's Church—Mr. L. E. McCloy, a member of the Board of Trustees of People's Church, spoke to an open meeting of the Men's Club on "Know Your Chicago." He illustrated his talk with colored slides.

Kansas City—Rev. Kendrick R. Lee, formerly minister of the Melrose, Massachusetts, Unitarian Church and presently in the Chaplaincy Training Program at the Boys' Industrial School in Topeka, Kansas, occupied the pulpit of Dr. Raymond B. Bragg on Sunday, November 27. He spoke on the subject, "The Religion of Psychiatry."

Alton—On November 27 the church school class that has been roaming the city visiting other churches and studying other religions returned home and participated in the morning service of its own church.

Chicago and St. Louis—The Sunday after Thanksgiving was the occasion for an exchange of pulpits. Dr. Leslie T. Pennington, minister of the First Unitarian Society, Chicago, exchanged with Dr. Thaddeus B. Clark, minister of the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis.

Indianapolis—An over-the-top successful Capital Fund Campaign has just been completed. It was conducted under direction of the Wells Organizations. It was successful from the financial point of view and the Wells director joined the church.

Iowa City—Church school enrollment has exceeded 100. The children of the church school organized a "Trick or Treat" campaign on Hallowe'en to raise funds for UNICEF.

Cedar Rapids—Increase in attendance at the Sunday morning services has made it necessary to purchase additional collection plates.

Burlington—Among the guest preachers at the Burlington Fellowship this Fall were Rev. Arnold Westwood, Urbana; Dr. Leslie T. Pennington, Chicago-First Church; and Rev. Charles W. Phillips, Des Moines.

Lincoln—Rev. Peter Raible arrived December 1 to take up his duties as minister of the Lincoln Unitarian Church.

Milwaukee—We are sorry to report the illness of both Dr. and Mrs. Ralph Bailey. Dr. Bailey's pulpit has been filled recently by Dr. Sidney Mead and Dr. John Hayward, both of the Federated Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago.

Denver—The Christmas Fair, scheduled for December 1 and 2, was well organized. Each area of activity, interest or both were assigned to a particular church organization. Everybody was included and no one left out from Alliance to Junior High and from Baby Sitting to Wrapping Paper.

THOUGHTS ON THE PLEASURES OF WINTER

"With snow falling again and Thanksgiving over, our thoughts will be turning now to the Christmas season and how to make it simple, sane, and significant, with a chance to enjoy the real beauty and the wholesome pleasures of the winter solstice. After a dip into the invigorating air how good it is to warm ourselves around our friendly home-built fires. Morning and evening skies are particularly beautiful just now. While walking downtown one morning last week we saw all the colors of the spectrum playing along the edge of some high feathery ice-crystal laden cirrus clouds. The first break of dawn over snow-covered Pikes Peak this morning flooding the whole region with rosy light was indescribably beautiful. The magnificence of this universe of which we are a part often exceeds our powers of description. It was that way today."

—Hurley Begun.